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ABSTRACT

Actions which state governors can take to promote the improvement of K-12 public education are presented in this brochure. The brochure is one of a series which offers specific ways in which different interest groups can respond to the eight broad action recommendations proposed by the Education Commission of the States' Task Force on Education for Economic Growth in their report, "Action for Excellence." The following areas are covered by the recommendations: (1) educational improvement plans; (2) partnerships between states and communities; (3) educational resources; (4) teacher improvement and recognition; (5) the student's academic experiences; (6) educational quality assurance; (7) educational leadership and management; and (8) services to students who are unserved or underserved. (DC)

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ACTIONS FOR GOVERNORS

Task Force on Education for Economic Growth

Education Commission of the States

EA015943

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE?

The challenge facing leaders in every state of the union is to inspire a new generation of citizens to be even more productive and imaginative than the generations who made "American know-how" a standard of excellence around the world. Beyond inspiring them, leaders must ***empower*** them by providing an education system that fosters the necessary skills, imagination and commitment.

Unfortunately, report after report indicates that we have for too long ignored the obvious connection between a well educated work force and a productive, expanding economy. In addition, technological changes over the last two decades are outpacing the schools' capacity to address change. Skills we asked the schools to stress a few short years ago seem inadequate today. And as the demand for highly trained people has risen, the achievement of students — especially in high-demand skills such as analysis or problem-solving — has been declining.

Americans have every right to be proud of an education system like no other in its commitment to serve ***all*** citizens, not just a privileged few. Today many exemplary schools, colleges and universities are graduating students who are as well prepared as any in the world to face the challenges of the future. But our schools must be strengthened, if they are to do what they alone can do: bring about an American renaissance.

We are challenged to act now, each in our own way, to:

- **Establish** clear, compelling and widely agreed upon goals and priorities for improving education
- **Upgrade** our expectations for children and the skills required to meet those expectations
- **Collaborate** as never before — educators, governors, legislators, business and labor leaders and citizens — to strengthen the schools
- **Educate** ***all*** students in the skills essential to economic productivity and to the high quality of life a strong, growing economy can provide.

WHAT IS THE RESPONSE?

In December 1982, the Education Commission of the States established a national Task Force on Education for Economic Growth under the leadership of Governor James B. Hunt, Jr. Forty-one distinguished national leaders set these goals for the Task Force:

- Create national understanding of the need for a well educated work force and of the changing skills essential to economic growth
- Promote policies, programs and actions that national, state and local leaders can use to improve education
- Establish partnerships among leaders in communities, business, labor, government and education to improve education in ways that lead to economic growth and a higher quality of life for all Americans.

The Task Force has published ***Action for Excellence,*** a report on the condition of education today and a series of recommendations for leaders throughout the country. The Task Force's eight major recommendations appear below. In an education policy adopted in February, 1982, the National Governors' Association also addressed the issue of the quality of education and called for the clear assignment of education responsibility within the federal system, while reaffirming the governors' strong position that states must play the primary role in the development of an effective education system. The actions described below, while not a specific part of the NGA policy, are definitive examples of some steps leaders might take to reaffirm a national commitment to our children and our economy.

WHAT ACTIONS CAN GOVERNORS TAKE?

The key action for governors is to assume a ***strong leadership role*** in supporting educational improvement in concert with state boards of education, chief state school officers, higher education authorities and state legislators. Many of the actions described here are ones that states are already taking; others may be new to some states. The actions suggest some of the ways states might improve education as they develop plans to address individual state needs. The Task Force will continue over the next year to identify additional steps useful to states in strengthening education for economic growth.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 1

Develop — and put into effect as promptly as possible — plans for improving education in the public schools from kindergarten through grade 12.

- Appoint a state Task Force on Education for Economic Growth that brings together leaders in business, labor, government, education and the public to carry on the mission of the national task force.
- Promote broad understanding of how work skills are changing and how education contributes to a growing economy.
- Communicate to citizens the urgency of the need to improve K-12 education now.
- Call for the development of a comprehensive action plan that:
  - — Examines the needs of public education, especially science, mathematics, computer education and communication
  - — Sets state education goals that link education and economic growth
  - — Specifies the skills needed for employment and citizenship
  - — Specifies how technology can be used to improve education
  - — Coordinates school improvement programs
  - — Promotes partnerships between educators and people outside the education community.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 2

Create broader and more effective partnerships for improving education in the states and communities of the nation.

- Appoint people from business, industry and labor, government, education, the scientific community and the public to boards, commissions and task forces that have policy-making responsibility in the education system.
- Invite leaders outside the traditional education system to share their expertise in management, training and technology.
- Bring together people who otherwise don't meet to discuss education goals.
- Mediate in situations where communication has broken down.
- Balance the interests of competing groups.
- Create regional or interstate programs — to train teachers, for example.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 3

Marshal the resources which are essential for improving the public schools.

- Ensure that education dollars are well spent.
- Working with the state legislature, give K-12 education a higher budget priority.
- Urge the federal government to maintain its essential role in assisting groups with special needs, guaranteeing access and supporting research and student aid.
- Present the facts on education in state-of-the-state addresses and other public messages.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 4

Express a new and higher regard for teachers and for the profession of teaching.

- Support improved programs for recruiting, training and certifying teachers.
- Advocate competitive salaries for teachers.
- Urge the creation of "career ladders" with changing levels of responsibility, pay and status for teachers.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 5

Make the academic experience more intense and more productive.

- Review the budget and policy decisions that affect the length of the school day and the school year.
- Establish a "scholars" program that rewards outstanding students.
- Encourage parents and teachers to be explicit and demanding about discipline, attendance and homework.
- Call for a study to determine how curriculum content and sequence can be strengthened and modernized.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 6

Provide quality assurance in education.

- Encourage the development of systems for measuring quality in education that provide reliable information on the performance of students, teachers and administrators.
- Call attention to the need to reexamine the procedures for selecting and retaining teachers.
- Urge colleges and universities to raise their entrance requirements.
- Propose that the process for certifying teachers and administrators be improved — and that certification rules be flexible enough to encourage service in the schools by people outside the education community.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 7

Improve leadership and management in the schools.

- Work with education leaders in the state to promote effective management at all levels of education.
- Acknowledge the principal as school leader by supporting programs that:
  — Encourage principals to make classroom instruction their highest priority
  — Provide extraordinary rewards for extraordinary principals
  — Set higher standards for recruiting, training and evaluating principals
  — Relate salaries for principals to responsibilities and effectiveness.
- Make opportunities for leadership and executive training available to principals and school administrators by, for example, establishing special institutes.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 8

Serve better those students who are now unserved or underserved.

- Encourage programs that:
  — Increase the representation of women, minority and handicapped students in fields where they are now underrepresented
  — Challenge academically gifted students.
- Support the broad, equitable distribution of educational resources so that no child is denied the possibility of becoming a productive member of society.

WHERE TO GET MORE INFORMATION

The Task Force will continue to be active, promoting efforts to improve K-12 education and developing products that governors and other concerned groups can use to improve education for economic growth. For more information, contact:

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